

Municipal budget savings total \$1.74 million in this fiscal year; Avedisian seeking \$1.86 million from Schools

A year ago, Mayor Scott Avedisian and municipal, police and fire unions agreed to contracts, ratified by the City Council, projected to save nearly \$10 million over 40 months. Avedisian announced today additional personnel savings, outside the scope of those contracts, and other measures, meant to help the city withstand a proposed \$3.3 million, fourth-quarter cut from the state as well as projected local revenue shortfalls.

Municipal Union Local 1651 members have agreed to four unpaid furlough days, which will save \$200,967. Non-union, municipal management employees will also be subject to the same furlough days, for an additional savings of \$112,922, Avedisian said.

Therefore, all municipal offices will be closed for business on the following Fridays: March 19, April 9, April 30 and May 14. Avedisian said that this schedule will also allow for modest savings in utility and heating costs.

Savings within the Fire Department, particularly in the area of clothing allowances and holiday pay, total \$396,000.

Avedisian said the personnel savings are the result of over a month's worth of meetings among and between members of his administration and union leadership. Fire and municipal unions approved the proposals at meetings this week.

Avedisian said he is still in discussions with the Police Union, which last year made concessions that alone saved the city \$1 million. Nevertheless, due to time constraints, Avedisian has authorized the withholding of 3.1 percent in police union personnel salaries, for a total of \$117,200.

"I sincerely thank our employees for their willingness to work with us as we try to make up devastating, mid-year cuts from the state," Avedisian said. "When you consider that union contracts don't expire until June 30, 2012, the fact that our employees have agreed to out-of-pocket cuts speaks volumes to their commitment to the city and its residents."

In addition, Avedisian said the city will save \$220,000 by leaving currently vacant positions unfilled. Line item budget reductions in every municipal department will save another \$700,000; all told, municipal savings is \$1,747,089.

Avedisian said he is seeking \$1.86 million in reductions from the School Department as well. In published reports last week, School Committee Chairman Christopher Friel indicated a willingness to examine across-the-board personnel salary reductions.

Once the School Department reduces its budget by the amount Avedisian is requesting, these measures will go a long way in helping the city to close the gap between the state's proposed fourth-quarter \$3.3 million cut and local revenue shortfalls, Avedisian said.

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